

# Hartford Data Snapshot

College Readiness & Persistence for High School Students



Rhaili-Em Lowe  
May 15, 2023

College access is important for improving education equity for all students. College enrollment indicates improved economic mobility as college graduates tend to earn more than high school graduates. The four-year high school graduation rate in Hartford was 72.3% in 2020-21, a 17.3 percentage point difference from the overall Connecticut graduation rate of 89.6%. The Connecticut State Department of Education offers various college readiness programs where high school students can utilize college planning tools, such as Naviance and College Board so that students can be prepared and motivated to apply for post-secondary education with support from their schools. Still, we see a difference in college enrollment and financial aid application rates in Hartford.

## The Discrepancy in College Enrollment between Hartford Students of Color and White Students

### Hartford High Schools College Enrollment Rates by Race Over Time

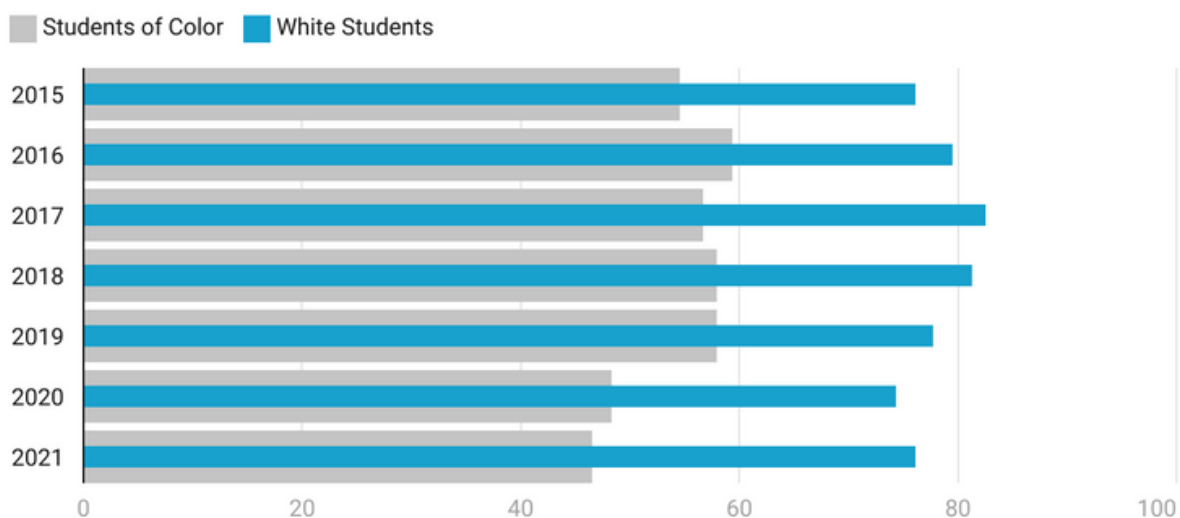


Chart: CT Data Collaborative • Source: Connecticut State Department of Education • Created with Datawrapper

Though high school students in Hartford Public Schools receive the same education, they reside in different cities and towns because of the school choice program and have different resources and opportunities. The differences contribute to the college enrollment rates for Hartford students. White Hartford students enroll in college at higher rates each year than students of color. 2021 was the lowest enrollment rate for students of color (46.6%), while white students had 76.2% enrollment rates. During the pandemic years, the difference was prominent. During the pandemic, it was harder for students to enroll in college, especially if this experience was new and unknown. White students still during this time could maintain over 70% enrollment while students of color were in the 40th percentile.

Source: CT State Department of Education

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## Decrease in Hartford Students Financial Aid Completion Rates

### FAFSA Completion Rate for Hartford Schools District Over Time

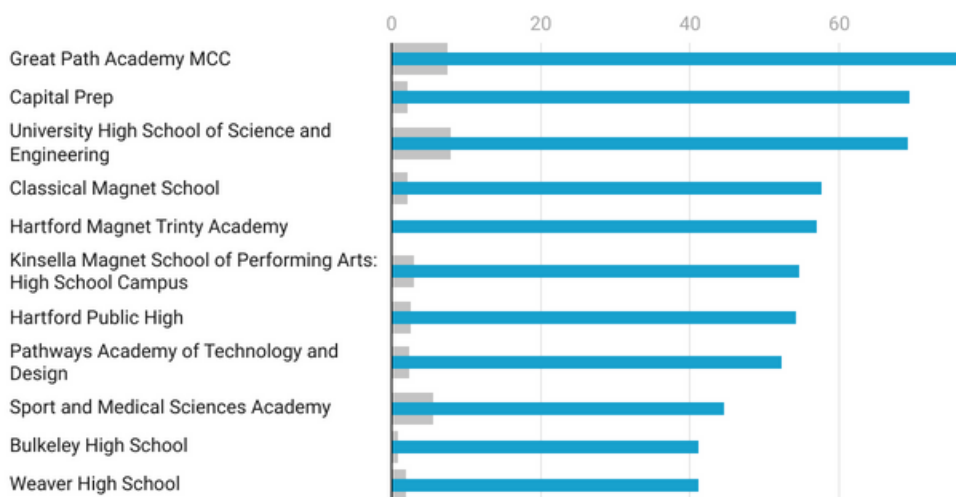


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The US Department of Education administers the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Students complete the FAFSA to apply for federal financial aid, including grants, loans, and work-study opportunities. The CT State Department of Education stresses the importance of the FAFSA and hosts special events, such as statewide challenges to motivate students to complete the FAFSA. Despite these incentives, the FAFSA completion rate for Hartford students has been very low over the years and has worsened with the pandemic. The low completion rates indicate that Hartford high school students may not receive an adequate amount of financial aid from prospective colleges which contributes to Hartford students being less likely to enroll and persist in college.

## FAFSA Completion Rate Starting Point & Continuing For Hartford School District's 2022-2023 School Year

October 12, 2022 April 25, 2023



Source: Connecticut State Department of Education • Created with Datawrapper

The FAFSA application process opens in October and students are urged to complete it as soon as possible before the February 15, 2023 deadline. The earlier it is completed, the quicker students receive a response and learn about award packages. The average completion rate for each school in Hartford increased dramatically from the fall to the spring. In October some schools were at 1%, while by April all of the schools had at least 40% completion rate. As more students are more interested in applying regular decision, they do not need to complete their FAFSA until the winter or spring, which may explain the spring increase.